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ABSTRACT

Within the arena of public school reform, teacher empowerment and participation in the decision making process at the building level are of paramount importance. A collaborative team of teacher educators and public school staff was assembled to assess various perceptions of site-based decision making throughout Georgia. A random sample of 400 building level administrators and teachers were asked to respond to a questionnaire designed to identify general perceptions related to what actually exists in site-based decision making and the level of importance placed on the concept within the school government structure. Five areas were examined: school climate; staff development; competency requirements; program content; and implementation patterns. A comparative analysis of respondents' perceptions and aspirations as reflected by importance indicators suggests: commitment to the inclusionary process; a correlation between building level administrators' commitment to the process and to levels of program development, implementation, and success; and prevailing conditions within the schools of Georgia are such that site-based decision making can begin to evolve. Data are presented in tabular form. (Contains 20 references.) (LL)

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On the Road to Empowerment: A Comprehensive Analysis of Teacher Involvement in Decision making Processes

Presented to the
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Abstract:

Within the arena of public school reform, teacher empowerment and teacher participation in the decision making process at the building level, are of paramount importance. Many believe that unless stake holders are involved in critical decision making efforts, other reforms will not come to fruition. There also exists within the schools, a level of reluctance to share power to meet these ends. With these concerns in mind, a collaborative team was assembled to assess the various perceptions of site-based decision making throughout the state of Georgia. The team was represented by faculty from teacher education programs and staff from the public schools. In many ways, the collaborative process with higher education and the public schools to undertake this study was as interesting as the study itself. The team came together to explore research methodology, devise a research strategy and then to implement the research process. The process proved to be very successful because it collectively used the varying expertise of its members to strengthen both the education of future teachers and the school improvement efforts.

The major focus of this study was to assess the level of site-based decision making efforts in public schools throughout the state. A random sample of approximately 400 building level administrators and teachers were surveyed. From this population over 56% elected to return the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to identify the general perception of respondents related to what actually existed in the area of site-based decision making and the level of importance placed on that concept within the school governance structure. Five areas were examined. Data was collected on climate, staff development efforts, competency requirements, content of the program and implementation patterns at the schools. Discussion will focus on a comparative analysis of what respondents perceived as existed and what their aspirations are as reflected by importance indicators. Data is presented in table form.

Among the conclusions drawn would suggest that the overwhelming majority were strongly committed to the inclusionary process of site-based decision making. There is a strong correlation between building level administrators' commitment to the process and the level of development and actual levels of success of the implementation of the program. In all areas examined what was reported to exist was rated lower than its perceived importance. This would suggest that much still needs to be done before shared governance becomes a functional reality.

The study is significant in that findings may be used to develop a working model which could be used to introduce site-based decision making concepts to small rural schools throughout the country. In addition, findings can be used by teacher education communities to improve the training of both teachers and administrators on this very important concept. Finally, the collaborative nature of the college/school research team, in its own right, should promote future joint ventures. These types of endeavors can only help to improve and strengthen the future course of education.

On the Road to Empowerment: A Comprehensive Analysis of Teacher Involvement in Decision Making Processes

by: David R. Murray, Mariko Tinney, Jesse Lasseter, Brenda Atkins and Robert Puckett

Introduction:

In a time when many feel there is a continuing crisis in education, it appears that the general public is ready for dramatic changes in the ways schools operate in order to bring about better services for students and communities. These feelings have given rise to serious restructuring efforts centered around the concept of teacher empowerment being realized at the local school building level. Schools around the nation are moving towards decentralized, site-based management plans. In simplified form, "the theory of professional empowerment is that, when given collective responsibility in an information-rich environment, educators will work harder and smarter on behalf of their clients: students and their parents" (Glickman, 1989 p.6).

Once we accept the theory of professional empowerment, it then becomes imperative that we also understand and accept the fact that each school community throughout America is different. For example, the makeup of each school constituency group is diverse and the school staff varies in many ways at each school site. In addition, the principal and other building level administrators are different as well. Most certainly, the students' needs in the various schools are as different as the very nature of our diverse nation. How then, given the differences that exist in our schools, is it possible to find common ground as we seek to obtain goals and objectives that are unique for each school community? Furthermore, how can we strike a balance between these special needs at the building level and meet the aspirations of our national educational agenda? This appears to be a fundamental and basic challenge for those schools seeking to empower teachers and bring about significant and enduring change - change that will help our students compete in a global economic climate and at the same time make positive contributions to a local community in which they live.

Once we acknowledge that the needs at each school site are different, it becomes imperative that we respect these conclusions and work with this understanding as we consider a process for change. While certain significant outcomes in each school will be unique to that school community, other outcomes will be common in response to national initiatives. This balance must be obtained and local educators should be involved in formulating the strategies which achieve this balance.

One of the fundamental common denominators in the move to empower teachers is in the realm of effective decision making at the local school site. This study revealed that the overwhelming majority surveyed were strongly committed to the inclusionary process of site-based decision making. It is acknowledged in school systems that decision making is most effective when it is closest to the site where the decisions will be implemented and monitored. Further, research clearly indicates that teachers who actively participate in making decisions have greater job satisfaction which results in better teaching and increased student involvement and learning. It seems clear that when collective decisions are made at the school site, all participants feel "ownership" of the process and put forth maximum effort to ensure success.

While effective decision making is an important base for any local site management plan, it is important to understand that the detail components of successful programs are, unfortunately, to a large degree not exportable. People should realize that success comes not from the detailed work done by the school, but primarily by the faculty whose "ownership" will not let the plan fail. The responsibility lies with those at the local site and every effort will be made to ensure success.

Therefore, when an empowered school succeeds, it has developed a program that is unique to its own staff, students, parents and community. Correctly, school reformer Carl Glickman (1990) has stated "the PROCESS of how a school came to such decisions is more transferable than the program." He further states "it is only the general notion of informed, representative decision-making that can be easily transported" (pg. 72).

While recognizing that specific decision making procedures in one school cannot always be a prescription for success in other schools, this study examined those skills, techniques and procedures that appear to be significant in all empowered schools. The study has attempted to articulate and define the concepts of decision making which appear to be significant regardless of local circumstances. Further, the study indicates that certain skills and techniques can enhance

local decision making, and at the same time, leave the substance of empowerment in the hands of the local school community.

Review of the Literature:

Historically, site-based decision making has its roots in private sector philosophies and practices. In the early 1900's, in the initial stages of the development of business, and hence organizations, scientific management determined that efficiency and cost effectiveness resulted when human resources were used to produce products in the most efficient way, with little or no regard for input or decision making by the worker. Frederick Taylor (1911) believed the best way to increase output was to improve the techniques used by workers. Consequently, Taylor considered people as instruments or machines to be manipulated by leaders. Accepting this assumption, other theorists of the scientific management movement proposed that an organization be developed to create more efficiency in administration, consequently increasing production.

Hersey and Blanchard (1988) interpreted this attitude as management divorced from human affairs and emotions. They indicated that, "The result was that the workers had to adjust to the management and not the management to the workers" (p. 87). Another theorist, Douglas McGregor (1960) called this attitude about how workers were to be perceived Theory X. Theory X assumes that most workers are not interested in assuming responsibility and prefer being directed. McGregor developed his own theory, Theory Y, which assumes that people by nature are not lazy and that they can be self-directed at work if properly motivated.

Although some aspects of site-based decision making in education have their roots in the private sector, the first gleanings of faculty involvement in decision making are found in the laboratory schools that come out of Dewey's Progressive Movement. Innovations in curriculum teaching strategies, and school organization were encouraged by the university and education departments with whom the schools were affiliated. The school organization enjoyed collegiality between the faculties of the universities, colleges and the laboratory schools. The exchange of knowledge that resulted from this new relationship among teachers promoted innovation.

The bureaucracy of public education which was influenced by scientific management's emphasis on rules, regulations and structures began to crack in the 1940's when administrators made some attempt to involve their faculties in decision making. These attempts coincided with the human relations movement in American management.

The once coercive or authoritarian management styles were slowly replaced by the human relations movement which emphasized that organizations could experience success if the managers fostered cooperation among the employees.

By the 1920's and the 1930's, Elton Mayo and his associates initiated the human relations movement which was to replace the trend initiated by Taylor. This movement determined that the real power of an organization lies with the collective commitment of the workers. According to Mayo (1945), "the organization had to be developed around the workers and had to take into consideration human feelings and attitudes" (p.23). Mayo emphasized the individual worker's desire for acceptance by his peers. "Management's role in Mayo's model was to provide an environment in which workers could fulfill their natural desire for cooperation" (Perrow, 1979, p 36).

Chester Barnard (1939), also a leader in the human relations movement, viewed organizations as cooperative rather than coercive. As recorded by the National Education Association (1988), in Barnard's view, "subordinates granted superiors the authority to make decisions." Like Mayo, Barnard, realized that informal groups "played an important role in intraorganizational communication and in encouraging organizational cohesiveness." (See *Employee Participation Programs*, p. 9)

Frederick Herzbergh (1959) developed his theory, motivational hygiene, as he sensed that knowledge about human nature, motives and needs could be invaluable to organizations and individuals. He found that when people were dissatisfied with their jobs, their concern centered on their working environment. When people felt good about their jobs, they seemed to be motivated by the work itself. The motivators included achievement, recognition of accomplishment, challenging work, increased responsibility, and personal growth and development.

In his research, Rensis Likert (1961) found that "supervisors with the best records of performance focus their primary attention on the human aspects of their subordinates' problems and on endeavoring to build effective work groups with high performance goals" (p. 7). He also found that high producing supervisors "make clear to their subordinates what the objectives are and what needs to be accomplished and then give them the freedom to do the job" (p. 7).

By the 1940's, rigid, authoritarian structures, rules and regulations, and highly formalized control systems characterized by management, had a firm hold in the bureaucracy of public education. The human relations movement had a softening effect on these formal structures. The results of the human relations movement in education saw the birth of faculty advisory committees and many informal mechanisms designed to diminish the social and emotional distance between teachers and administrators.

Even though the bureaucracy had experienced some weakening with the advent of the human relations movement, there were many areas in which it remained intact. Unfortunately, the shift in managerial emphasis still lacked substance in faculty involvement in decision making. "Its predominate emphasis was consultation, not participation" (*Employee Participation Programs*, NEA, p. 10). Management continued to control the directing of school operations; however, the human relations approach did raise managerial consciousness about the importance of the inner workings of the school environment and informal groups. Yet, the emphasis remained, "the control of employee behavior and not the transformation of the school organization" (*Employee Participation Programs,* NEA, p. 10).

The missing ingredient in true site-based decision making at this point was direct participation. In the 1960's, the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning introduced Research and Instruction Units into several public schools. The intent was to initiate school reorganization by establishing new relationships "among central staff members, subject matter consultants, building principals, teachers and non certified personnel" (Smith and Klausmeier, 1967, p. 10). New programs were designed by school personnel cooperating with Research and Development Center staff. Within the schools, teamwork was encouraged to improve and refine the instructional program.

According to research conducted by John Goodlad (1984) and his colleagues, "the degree of staff cohesiveness and the nature of problem-solving and decision-making climates within the schools were highly related to teacher satisfaction."

Recently, private sector workplace initiatives, the research on effective schools, declining public confidence in education and reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century* (Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), have placed external and internal pressures on public education for change and have forced many educators to take restructuring schools seriously. Education reform has now

connected the health of the nation's educational system to the health of the economy. *A Nation At Risk* had a powerful impact on public perceptions because it contended that "the present system of education could not adequately prepare students for the nation's increasingly technological society" (*Site-based Decision making: A Guidance and Training Manual,* NEA, p. 12). As in past economic and social crises, Americans have turned to education to demand a new and improved supply of young people with the knowledge and skills to make our nation once again competitive with foreign markets. As a result, educators are scrambling to search for corrections in educational weaknesses in the system, and schools are being restructured.

> There is a new consensus on the urgency of making our schools once again the engines of progress, productivity, and prosperity. Furthermore, the key to success lies in creating a profession equal to the task - a profession of well-educated teachers prepared to assume new powers and responsibilities to redesign schools of the future (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

One of the recommendations of the Task on Teaching as a Profession of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, was to "restructure schools to provide a professional environment for teachers, freeing them to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for student progress" (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

In 1986, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy released *A Nation Prepared.* Like the Presidential Commission on Excellence in Education in *A Nation at Risk*, the Carnegie Forum in its report expressed the concern that the nation's economic health was connected to its educational health. The basic recommendation of the Carnegie report was to professionalize teaching. It proposed that

> stricter standards be coupled with high levels of compensation designed to attract qualified candidates and that decentralized decision making (which grants teachers more opportunity to exercise their professional discretion) be featured prominently in schools. In this way quality would be ensured by the standards process and not by top-down regulations, thus allowing teachers greater autonomy and room for decision making in the educational process .

The decentralized decision making the report proposed, according to the NEA in its training manual for site-based decision making, however, "was limited by a tiered teaching force

with teachers in the upper tiers having significantly greater decision making authority than teachers in lower tiers" (p. 11).

For the past two decades reform of public schools has been on the political agenda from the White House to the State House. During the 1970's the focus of reform was on the return to the basics which resulted in the creation of state and national standards of achievement. Public school policy had not been decided at the school level. For example, the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) Restructuring of Schools Task Force (1991) found that under current structures "top-down mandates became the way to ensure educational excellence" (p. 1). Even though the top-down approach has not achieved the immediate change desired by the reformers, it has resulted in more attention and resources being directed towards improving public schools. GAE stated that,

> since 1983, states have generated more rules and regulations dealing with education than in the previous twenty years combined. There were more than 700 state statutes enacted between 1984 and 1986. Of all the states, Georgia was one of the most highly regulated. The effect of such prolific legislation on public schools has been a regulatory maze that often paralyzes decision making (p. 2).

Emphasis is placed on compliance, whereas, innovation is sacrificed for mediocrity. Furthermore, GAE stated that:

> For education to benefit all students, the major decisions about education must be made where the students are -- that is - the local schools. Those decisions must be made by teachers, students, parents, and other community resources. It is becoming increasingly clear that the local school must have the power to develop and implement policy that best meets the needs and goals of the school and the community it serves (p. 2).

One recommendation of the Georgia Association of Educators Restructuring of Schools Task Force (1989) was to establish pilot programs for site-based decision making as models for decentralizing educational governance where appropriate" (p. 4).

Harvey and Crandall (1988) asserted that "if significant changes in the educational system are to occur, restructuring efforts must be focused on and driven by the local level. If restructuring is to be successful, it must be building-based" (p. 11).

Timar and Kirp (1987) point out the limitations of a top-down approach. "A school must set a tone that will be apparent to the students. That tone, an organizational ethos, determines the character of the school. It sets the expectation for excellence or failure. But it is created by individuals working in schools, not by bureaucratic mandates that emanate from distant places" (p. 308).

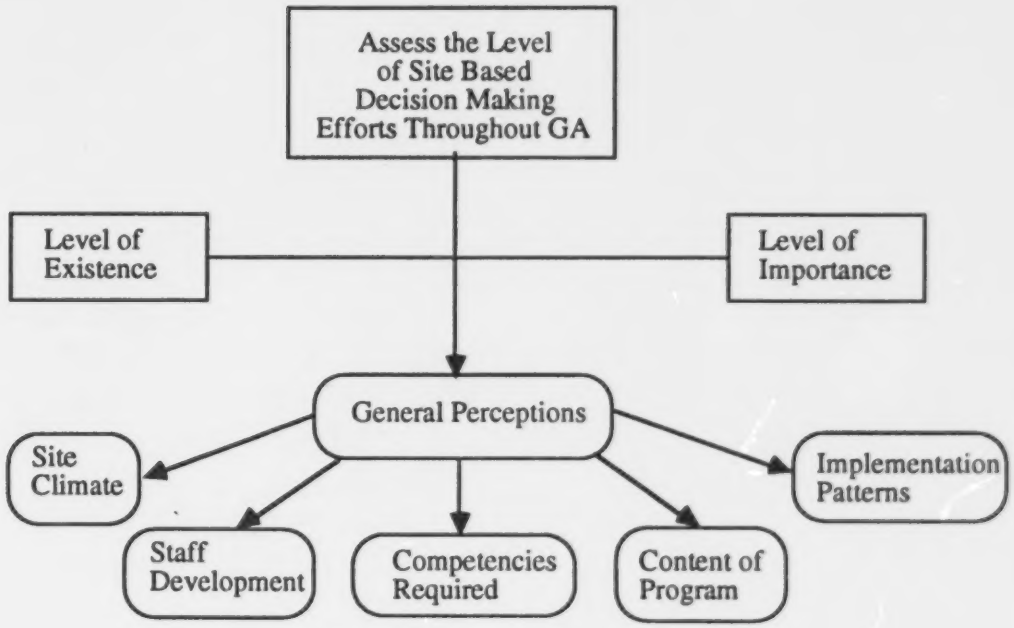
As a result of all the foregoing movements, there has been more emphasis on the human relations approach, therefore preparing the way for new decision making models being developed at the school level. Also, there has been more decentralization of the bureaucracy. Because of these movements, more efforts are currently being made to change public education from a top-down organization to an organization developed through the decision making efforts of the stakeholders at the local level.

Statement of the Problem:

Professional empowerment is not an issue per se. Schools across the country have agreed in principle, if not in practice, to involve teachers as stakeholders in the decision making efforts and to collectively study and make the changes necessary to improve our schools. We also suggested that schools are different and these differences will undoubtedly influence how teacher empowerment will be articulated and implemented.

The problem that our research team considered worthy of investigating relates to identifying what common practices need to exist within the public school environment to successfully articulate and implement initial site-based decision making efforts. It was quite obvious that some schools adapted the theories which promoted teacher empowerment successfully, while others did not. To identify these common practices, general perceptions were identified from a random selection of teachers and administrators from the public school sites throughout the state of Georgia. The level of actual existence and a level of perceived importance was identified in five areas. The five areas include assessing the site climate, the level of staff development, identifying competencies required, content of the site-based decision making program and the implementation patterns that participants generally perceived.

Figure No. 1
Research Design Model by Area



Research Procedures:

A general list of schools identified as having implemented site-based decision making within their individual school sites was compiled from several sources. A random sample of approximately 400 building level administrators and teachers were surveyed. From this population, 56% elected to return the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed in three sections. Part I identified basic demographic data. Part II required responses related to the existence and importance of the climate, staff development, competencies, content and implementation patterns of the programs being reviewed. The final section represented a free response section where respondents could provide narrative information. This section was found to be extremely valuable, as many had indicated that their program was in its infancy.

Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions on specific items in two ways. First, they were asked to indicate what they believed already existed in their school and then rate that item on their perception of its importance. Responses were converted to a scale of 1-5; one being

the lowest possible score representing a response of never and 5 the highest representing a response of always or a priority.

As the audience who would benefit from the research findings the most were educational practitioners, not necessarily researchers, data was presented, in most cases, by simple frequency counts, percentages and weighted scores. It was decided to keep the data as simple as possible so it could be used by a large population of school practitioners. Tables and line graphs were also constructed. Data was analyzed and supporting narrative provided.

Analysis of the Data:

Population Demographics:

The population was a sampling of professional educators from elementary, middle schools and secondary schools throughout the state of Georgia. The professional responsibilities included building level administrators, traditional classroom teachers, and special area teachers. District level administrators were also surveyed; however only one elected to return the questionnaire. Participating schools represented urban, suburban and rural areas. The data is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Population Profile by Professional Responsibility, Years in Education, School Type and Community Size

Professional Responsibility:		School Type:	
Building Level Administrator	11.36%	Elementary	61.82%
Classroom Teacher	71.36%	Middle School	18.18%
Special Area Teacher	16.82%	Secondary School	18.18%
District Level Administrator	.45%	Other	1.82%
Years in Education:		Community Size:	
1-5	18.18%	Urban population	18.64%
6-10	17.73%	Small city or suburban area	41.36%
11-15	23.64%	Large Town	8.18%
16-20	22.27%	Rural Area	30.91%
20-25	12.27%	No response	1.00%
25+	4.55%		

Site Climate:

As site climate is one of the most important issues directly impacting on the overall growth and development of teacher involvement into the decision making process, perceptions of

respondents pertaining to both what existed and the value of that condition were initially examined.

Over 80% of the respondents agreed that the climate at their school promoted educational planning as a collaborative effort between teachers and administrators; 30% suggested that collaborative effort always existed. In addition, 49% of the respondents indicated that teachers are always involved in making school improvement through cooperative planning and its implementation. Further, over 95% of the respondents perceived teacher involvement in school improvement a priority or, at the very least, very important.

As teachers and administrators alike, were aware of the reports for increased teacher involvement, a question was generated to identify levels of cooperation between teachers and local administrators. Just under 40% of the population perceived the shift of decision making responsibilities to be expected. When asked whether cooperation between teachers and local central office administrators regarding the shifting of decision making responsibilities is expected, just under 15% reported that in the case of district level administrators, resistance might exist. This lower reporting may be due to the fact that district administrators do not deal directly with teachers and instruction. Nevertheless, almost 82% of the respondents perceived district level administrator support to be extremely important or a priority. It is interesting to note that over 89% of the respondents indicated that building level administrators recognize teacher involvement in decision making responsibilities. Teachers and administrators both generally perceive building level administrators to be a key figure in this process. This key role may take the form of a facilitator, arbitrator, resource person or liaison between the faculty, central administration and the general public at large.

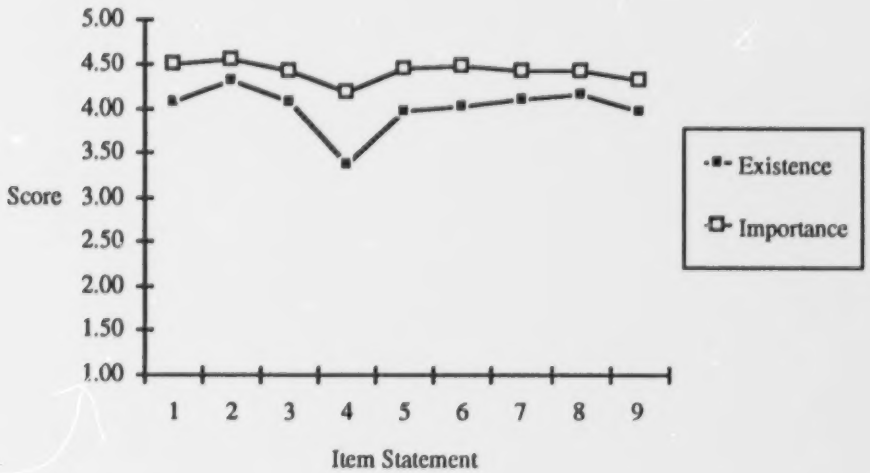
In terms of existing climate, 74% of the respondents perceived that teachers would be willing to give up some of their own time and commit themselves to the collaborative process while over 93% of the respondents felt that this was a priority or very important that teachers do this. Moreover, the greater majority perceived that the decision making process be a shared responsibility with administrators especially when it comes to identifying local school problems and coming up with solutions. It is evident that teachers do not wish to see a climate that eliminates administrators from the process; rather a total inclusionary process is perceived to be the most desirable. Optimism increased as the majority of participants felt that high morale is expected as a result of implementing an inclusionary model involving site-based decision making in their schools. Further, they suggest that site-based decision making is expected to improve the quality of work life for the entire school; not just for teachers. In addition, parent/school

communications improved and the adoption of site-based decision making is expected to contribute to the overall improvement of relationships with parents. Table 2 and Figure 2 present the existence versus importance weighted scores for comparison.

Table 2
Climate - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Scale (1-5; 5 being the highest)

	Score for Existence	Score for Importance
1. Educational planning is a collaborative effort between teachers and administrators.	4.06	4.49
2. Teachers are involved in school improvement planning and its implementation.	4.31	4.56
3. Cooperation between teachers and local school administrators regarding the shifting of decision making responsibilities is expected.	4.06	4.41
4. Cooperation between teachers and local central office administrators regarding the shifting of decision making responsibilities is expected.	3.36	4.18
5. If given decision making power teachers would be willing to give of their time and commit themselves to the process.	3.96	4.44
6. Teachers and local school administrators together share responsibility for identifying local school problems and coming up with solutions.	4.02	4.47
7. Higher morale is expected as a result of site-based decision making.	4.08	4.41
8. Site-based decision making is expected to improve the quality of work life.	4.16	4.43
9. Site-based decision making is expected to contribute to the improvement of parent/school communications.	3.95	4.30

Figure 2
Climate - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Line Graph Comparison by Item



All the questions on the survey instrument related to the site climate received fairly high weighted scores suggesting that site climate is an extremely important part of implementing site-based decision making in a school. However, when comparing the perceived importance to the

perceived existence, importance always received a higher rating. This would suggest that much needs to be done to improve individual school climates to facilitate site-based decision making. However, it is a concept that has established its roots into the very fabric of schools and aspirations of the respondents suggest that healthy climates are on the rise.

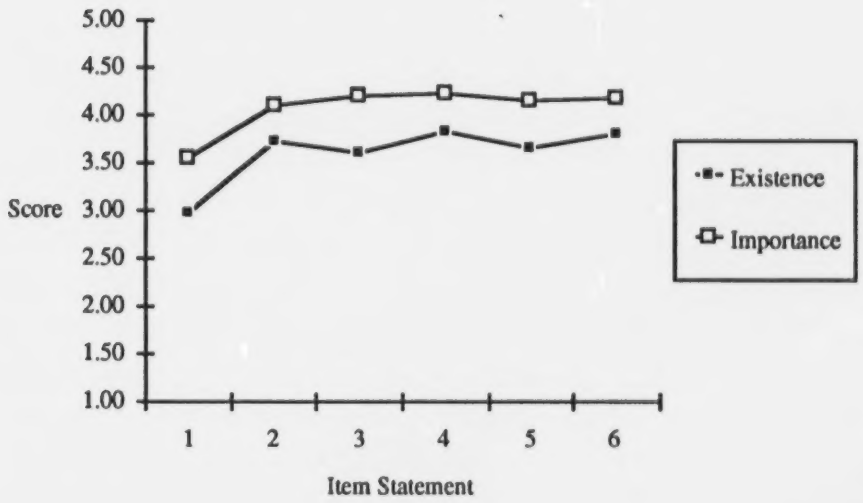
Staff Development:

As with any new concept, staff development efforts need to be designed and developed to insure optimal understanding. These efforts, in many cases are shared responsibilities between the central administration and the teacher work force. They may take the form of formal workshops, classes or less formal engagements such as information sharing or simple dialogue. Whatever shape or form staff development takes, it is vital to the growth of peer leadership development which, in turn, is the basis of all site-based decision making efforts. When asked whether teachers and administrators discuss educational issues from professional journals on a regular basis, only 14.22% of the population suggested this activity always existed. Only 17.05% perceived this dialogue to be a priority. However, the majority did suggest that it was important. In terms of more formalized arrangements such as workshops or courses, teachers and administrators cooperatively plan activities related to shared governance and decision making. This was the perception of approximately 86% of the population surveyed. In the greater majority of schools, research and locally gathered data are used to develop school improvement plans. Less than 14% of the respondents suggested that data gathering activities did not exist. This would suggest that teachers and administrators recognize the use of scientific processes in cooperative planning and perhaps within the shared governance process as well. Overall, 86% indicated that teachers and administrators cooperatively explore specific information about site-based decision making concepts prior to implementation. In both actual existence and in importance, collaborative efforts by teachers and administrators in both developing and providing staff development was rated the highest. Again, however, the perceived importance of any given concept in staff development was rated higher than the existence of these concepts in an actual school site. Table 3 and Figure 3 present a graphical comparison of this data.

Table 3
Staff Development - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Scale (1-5; 5 being the highest)

	Score for Existence	Score for Importance
1. Teachers and administrators together discuss educational issues from professional journals on a regular basis.	2.97	3.55
2. Teachers and administrators cooperatively plan for staff development activities related to shared governance and decision making.	3.71	4.09
3. Site-based decision making is supported through staff development funds and assistance from the central office.	3.60	4.20
4. Staff development programs are developed/provided by teachers and administrators.	3.82	4.22
5. Research and locally gathered data are used to develop school improvement plans.	3.63	4.13
6. Teachers and administrators explored specific information about site-based decision making concepts prior to implementation.	3.78	4.16

Figure 3
Staff Development - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Line Graph Comparison by Item



Basic Competencies:

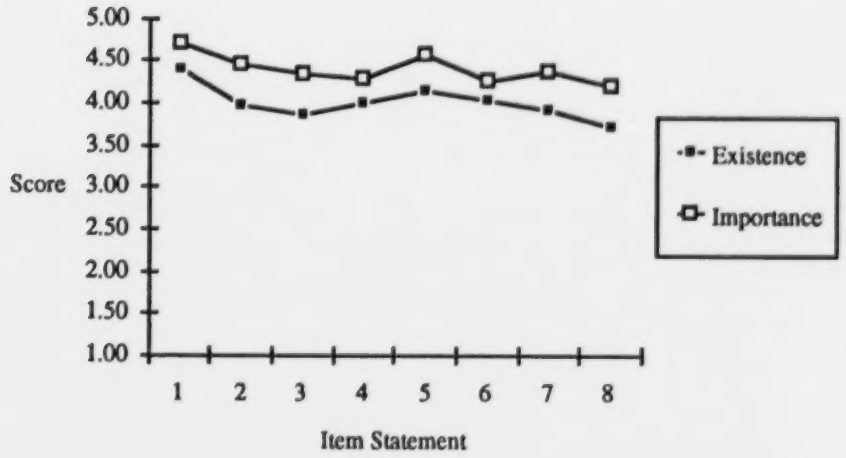
When engaging in site-based decision making and shared governance, various basic competencies must exist or be obtained to insure a high level of success. The building administrator or principal has been identified as a key figure during this transformational process. For example in terms of existence, over 97% suggested that principals must have a clear vision of the school's mission and should be able to articulate that mission. In terms of importance, all agreed this concept was important with the majority indicating it was a top priority.

In addition, the ability to reach group consensus was among the priority skills for teachers. 99.9% of the respondents rated this as important, very important or a priority. Although the mission statement and role of the principal received the highest rating, clearly consensus building on the part of teachers and successfully employing non-confrontational skills in the decision making process are imperative. Further, accepting responsibility for the success or failure of site-based decision outcomes by all of the school staff also received a high rating. Shared governance and decision making does mean shared responsibility, and teachers perceive this. Generally, the respondents perceived that teachers and administrators should set and work towards common goals based on visions they have made cooperatively. The respondents felt that it was important to update the school mission statement periodically and that statements developed should reflect the values of the entire staff. Comparisons of existence versus importance weighted scores for competency areas are displayed in Table 4 and Figure 4 respectively.

Table 4
Competencies - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Scale (1-5; 5 being the highest)

	Score for Existence	Score for Importance
1. The principal has a clear vision of the school's mission and is able to articulate it.	4.39	4.70
2. Teachers can reach decisions based on group consensus.	3.97	4.45
3. School staff is prepared to accept responsibility for successes or failures of site-based decision outcomes once they are implemented.	3.86	4.33
4. Belief statements are developed that reflect the values of the staff.	4.01	4.28
5. Teachers and administrators set and work toward common goals based on the visions they have made together.	4.16	4.56
6. Teachers and administrators periodically develop and/or update a mission statement for the school.	4.02	4.25
7. Teachers and administrators can demonstrate non-confrontational skills in the decision making process.	3.91	4.37
8. Data and other information are collected to be used for proposed changes.	3.71	4.20

Figure 4
Competencies - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Line Graph Comparison by Item



Program Content and Implementation Patterns:

Earlier in the introduction, we indicated that because schools were uniquely different, content and implementation patterns would be different as well. We, as a team, would suggest that those differences should be identified and become part of the individualized site plan. Notwithstanding, there are some areas that can transcend these differences. As identified in this survey, implementation patterns receiving the highest scores are two areas of vital importance. Among these patterns were the fact that teachers and administrators have developed a written plan to implement site-based decision making within their school site. Also along these same lines, building goals are communicated to the public via newsletters, parent meetings and the like. Communications were also rated the highest in terms of importance. It was further suggested that student test results and other forms of data are used in program planning. Matching outcomes to future school directions should be of primary concern.

Teachers being allowed to incorporate changes in curriculum or methodology in the classroom based on site-based decision making and outcomes at the local school level received the second highest weighted score in this area. This would suggest that given test scores and other forms of data, teachers should collectively analyze this information and bring about change in the classrooms. These changes may include defining grade level skills and various competencies developed at the local site. This might even include establishing such school wide

programs as ungraded or multi-aged classroom environments if teachers and administrators perceive that outcomes will improve under these arrangements.

Directly related to curricular and methodological choice in the area of content and implementation is the establishment of maintenance activities that would update and strengthen the program. Approximately 67.6 percent rated this activity to be important. This would suggest that both implementation processes in site-based decision making and the decisions themselves would be monitored and changed or updated depending upon the needs at the site or changes in various variables such as the student population or community resources.

Forty eight percent of the sites surveyed suggest that orientations and staff development training was very important or a priority for both teachers and administrators. The site-based decision making process needs to be explored thoroughly. Weighted scores would also indicate that teachers and administrators assess the risks and benefits of site-based decision making as either part of the staff development process or separately. Such things as concept development, time tables for implementation, personnel involvement and the like, hold characteristics that have both risks and benefits during implementation. They need to be placed in perspective. In addition, teachers want decision making involvement when developing the school's instructional and staff develop budget although this may not be as high a priority. This is sometimes viewed as a district level administrative function. Nevertheless, teachers need to be involved in identifying their own school needs and actively participate in activities designed to meet those needs. This is a shared responsibility that cannot be dictated from a top-down posture.

Of less importance to the population being surveyed was the inclusion of parents and students into the decision making process. This may be due to the fact that teacher empowerment itself is new and therefore involving parents and students at this stage of development may be perceived as premature.

Generally respondents to the questionnaire perceive the adoption process in the implementation of site-based decision making as ongoing evolutionary process that requires a great deal of flexibility. External consultants are used by many schools but they are considered of moderate importance.

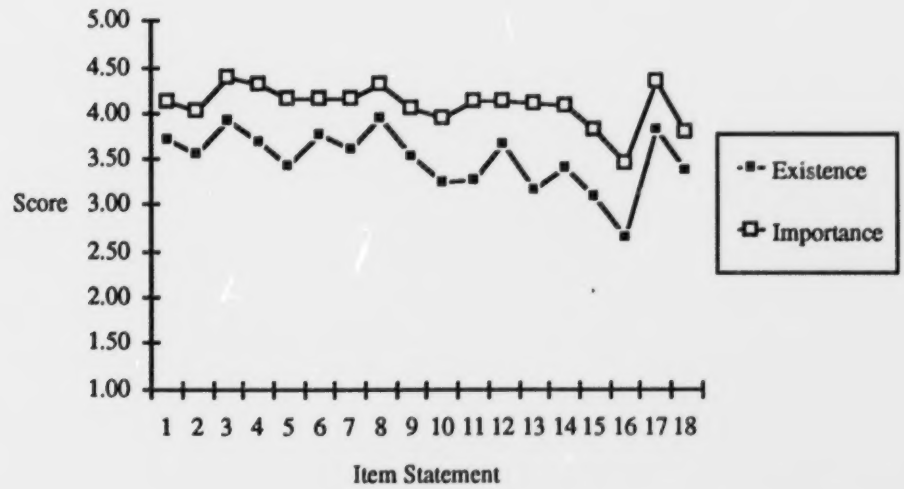
As in the other areas, respondents to the survey perceived all initial implementation patterns to be more important than what they perceived to actually exist. This would suggest that

aspirations are high while they continue to deal with the realities of public school service. Table 5 and Figure 5 provide a comparison of implementation patterns.

Table 5
Implementation Patterns - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Scale (1-5; 5 being the highest)

		Score for Existence	Score for Importance
1.	Teachers and administrators have assessed the risks and benefits of site-based decision making.	3.71	4.13
2.	Teachers and administrators have examined alternative approaches.	3.55	4.02
3.	Teachers and administrators have developed a written plan to implement site based decision making.	3.92	4.39
4.	Orientation and training have been provided for both teachers and administrators.	3.69	4.30
5.	Maintenance activities updating or strengthening the program have been established.	3.43	4.15
6.	Student test results and other forms of data are used in program planning.	3.76	4.15
7.	Follow up activities are used to monitor improvement and changes.	3.61	4.16
8.	Building goals are communicated to the public via newsletters, parent meetings, etc.	3.94	4.30
9.	The school brings parents into an active role in planning and achieving the goals of the school.	3.54	4.05
10.	Central office and the local school work interdependently in the site-based decision making process.	3.25	3.94
11.	Administrators grant teachers release time for site-based decision making.	3.27	4.13
12.	Both periodic and end of school year evaluations are built into operational plans that carry out school improvement activities.	3.66	4.11
13.	Grade level skills competencies are developed at the local site and understood by all staff members and parents.	3.17	4.10
14.	Teachers have decision making involvement in regard to the school's instructional and staff development budget.	3.40	4.08
15.	Parents have been included in the decision making process.	3.09	3.80
16.	Students have been included in the decision making process.	2.65	3.45
17.	Teachers are allowed to incorporate changes in curriculum or methodology in the classroom based on site-based decision making outcomes at the local school.	3.83	4.34
18.	An external consultant is used to assist implementation of a site-based decision/management model in your school.	3.38	3.79

Figure 5
Implementation Patterns - Existence vs Importance by Weighted Score
Line Graph Comparison by Item



When reviewing the free response section of the questionnaire, many patterns began to emerge. For example, many of the sites surveyed were at the beginning stages of program development in site-based decision making. Prior to engaging in shared governance activities, the overwhelming majority indicated that teachers perceived that they had very little control over their own environment and yet had many responsibilities for which they were held accountable. This lack of ownership in some cases was devastating to the morale of the staff and impacted such variables as teacher retention and the overall climate in the school.

Several testimonials suggest that in order for site-based decision making to work, all staff must "buy" into the concept. Central office staff in particular were singled out. One respondent stated that "the central office must allow a lot of free rein; if not, site-based management will always be crippled or demoralized." The respondent goes on to say, "people will lose faith and give up the process if only lip service is given." Others suggest that the central office must share the same vision. They also indicated that developing a mission statement means very little if no money backs it up. Restructuring will need financial support over a period of time as teachers and administrators assume different roles.

Time was a major factor. Restructuring must be supported by ample time and training for transition. When this happened one suggested, it became easier to set goals, develop plans and

reach consensus. In addition, programs grow stronger and teachers are beginning to receive support as the central administration sees improvements. More freedom is allowed and more finances are directed towards success.

Many of the comments indicated that work at the schools has become more reliable, efficient and effective. For example, there appears to be more interest and enthusiasm and experiences have been mostly positive. One indicated that improvements in test scores, attitudes and increased involvement has been seen. Along those same lines, one reported that, "site-based decision making has been the most unifying and stimulating innovation to this school in its history." She goes on to say, "it has freed teachers to design and create educational initiatives." A certain level of pride permeates the school and the climate appears to be focused towards creating a better future.

With any new venture, frustration is experienced. However great strides are being made. Some of this frustration was related to the lack of understanding on the part of the principals. One respondent states that, "levels of understanding varies greatly according to each individual." It was pointed out that communications needs to be stronger.

Conclusions:

There are many inferences that can be drawn from the findings. The role of the building level administrator will increase in importance; especially during the transformational period when top down mandates and bottom-up recommendations exist in the same school district. In addition to facilitating communications between the central office and the instructional staff, the building level administrator must facilitate opportunities for teachers to be involved in decision making. The level of implementation of site-based decision making and the level of district level support appears to be directly connected with the level of success in the various instructional programs and the ability of the principal to communicate that success to the powers-to-be, i.e. central administration, the Board of Education and the parents.

Commitment on the part of central administration was foremost on the minds of many of the respondents. Some teachers indicated a reluctance by the central administration to endorse or support site-based decision making efforts. Funding support for staff development, teacher release time and the like, usually is funneled through the central office and this may have been the reason for their concerns.

Staff development should be an on going activity for both administrators and teachers. Concepts in group dynamics, conflict resolution and program review and risk assessment are areas that should be explored. Accordingly, building group consensus was among the highest of priorities. The study suggests that teachers and administrators should incorporate change. However these changes and improvements should be monitored and evaluation plans should be built into operational plans.

The local school, the central office and parents should work interdependently in the planning and in the achievement of school improvement goals. Further, the study would suggest using an independent external consultant to assist in the implementation of site-based decision making. This would bring some very needed expertise and some objectivity as well. Among the most often reported were the League of Professional Schools and RESA.

Summary:

The major findings of this study would suggest that the prevailing conditions in regards to the present climate within the schools of Georgia are such that site-based decision making can begin to evolve. Teacher involvement in school improvement was a high priority and the existence of that involvement was highly expected.

Of some concern was whether the cooperation between teachers and central office administrators would increase as many perceived some resistance from this group. The greater majority of the respondents perceive the support of central office administration to be very important. The shared governance initiatives of teachers and school level administrators would be very difficult if cynicism on the part of central administrators was a basis on which the climate of schools existed. Public attitudes towards schooling in America suggest that society is ready for change in the way schools do business. As schools respond and begin to draw from support for new initiatives, talents can be released to create a better climate.

Respondents would suggest that building level administrators are crucial for the implementation of site-based decision making to occur within their respective schools. Furthermore, the respondents indicate that this activity be based on an inclusionary concept which involves both administrators and teachers in a shared governance approach. Generally, the perception does not elude to the fear that with true site-based decision making, the empowerment of teachers excludes administrators. On the contrary, responsibility should be shared and the building level administrator plays a decisive role.

The greater majority suggested that change at their site was painstakingly slow. Retaining a consultant or working with groups in higher education appears to be beneficial in working towards success in this area. Clearly, the more teachers and building level administrators share responsibility for decision making, the more uncertainty both groups experience. Working with a consulting group such as the Program for School Improvement (PSI) directed by Carl Glickman from the University of Georgia, or others of a similar mission would provide a support mechanism that could be extremely helpful.

Staff development is an important variable and total participation is a priority. Schools have very complex problems and inclusionary models such as site-based decision making is also a complex process. The participants of the study believe that the staff development efforts should be cooperatively planned. Among the priorities include specific training of site-based decision making skills themselves. Engaging in action research to develop improvement plans was also considered important.

Many competencies were examined. Defining clear mission statements and building group consensus were extremely important for success. The ability of teachers and administrators to set and work towards common goals based on the mission they have developed, was also necessary.

There are many generic activities that should be included when implementing site-based decision making in a school. Having a written plan was one of the highest priorities and communicating the goals which grow out of this plan to the public was also of great importance. Good site-based decision making efforts do not happen by accident. They are well thought through and planned. Innovations do not happen arbitrarily. They grow out of a plan as well and are usually implemented with the support of the community. Therefore communicating innovative efforts to parents should be of major consideration. Among these changes should be creating opportunities for teachers to incorporate change into their curriculum or methodology. Further more, these changes should be based on such variables as test scores and other types of data. Risk taking would be encouraged. However, it should be calculated risk focused on outcome measures.

Should these patterns of implementation occur, site-based decision making will grow and shortly it will have a solid influence on overall school improvement. The road to teacher

empowerment will be a long and slow moving one, but it will endure and will create and foster a better and more responsive school environment.

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